

connection with the taxes.¹ The reign of terror had begun. The victims were usually dragged from the place of their arrest to a block in Cheapside, where their heads were instantly struck *off*.

There was but one ark of safety, where many whose blood was sought had already taken refuge. Gower compares the Tower of London during this terrible crisis "to a ship into which all those had climbed who could not live in the raging sea. It had been the King's headquarters for the last two days. It was from the Tower steps that he had been rowed across to the conference at Mother hi the. His mother was with him in the famous fortress, as were Treasurer Hales and Chancellor Sudbury, for whose heads the rebels clamoured ; his uncle Buckingham and his young cousin Henry, who was destined to depose him; the Earls of Kent, Suffolk, and Warwick ; Leg, the author of the poll-tax commission, now tremblin-g for his life, and, last but not least, the Mayor Walworth."² But the noblest among them all was the tried and faithful servant of Edward the Third, the Earl of Salisbury. A soldier who had shared in the early glories of the Black Prince, a diplomatist who had dictated the terms of Bretigny to the Court of France, he seems to have held aloof in his old age from the intrigues of home politics ; but in the imminent danger that now threatened his country he acted a part not unworthy of the title he bore. One man was absent from this assembly of notables, who, if he had been present, would assuredly never have left the Tower alive. John of Gaunt had good cause to be thankful that, during the month when England was in the hands of those who sought his life, he was across the border arranging a truce with the Scots. By the evening of Thursday, a great mob was encamped on St. Catherine's Hill, over against the Tower, clamouring for the death of the ministers who had there taken refuge. Sudbury was the principal victim whom they demanded. The most horrible of all sounds, the roar of a mob howling for blood, ever and again penetrated into the chambers of the Tower where prelates and nobles * sat still with awful eye/ *

¹ *O R- &-*, 482, **Bex.** 43. * *Froiss.*, ii. 469-71 ;
Knigh-ton, **ii**, 132-8.

* *Froiss.*, ii. 469.